

Office of Human Resources

Personnel Newsletter

July 2000

LEARNING CENTER SUPPORTS SAFETY INITIATIVE

It is the policy of NASA Glenn Research Center to provide a safe and healthful work environment for all employees. The Learning Center strives to fulfill its commitment to safety by offering current safety training programs. The Learning Center has over 200 safety training programs in 17 different categories to assist you in planning your next safety meeting. By identifying potential hazardous conditions, using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and taking precautions both on and off the job you can continue to keep GRC a safe place in which to work.

A few of the Learning Center's safety training programs which may assist you with your summer safety meetings are: *Roac Rage and The Aggressive Driver*; *Summer Sports: Safety Wins!*; *Heat Stress Prevention*; *Grounds Keeping: Lawn Mower Safety*; *Boating Safety*; *Judgment on the Water*; *Effective Cycling*; *Housekeeping* and *Teamwork in Industry*.

The new **Safety Catalog**, as well as other Learning Center catalogs, can be found online at the Web site listed below, or you may call us at extension 3-2996, or extension 3-2997 to receive a hard copy of any of our catalogs.

The Learning Center is located in Building 21, Room 3
Hours: 7:30 – 4:30 Monday-Friday
433-2996

<http://www.lerc.nasa.gov/WWW/LC/>



VETERANS' PREFERENCE FOR SERVICE IN KOSOVO

President Clinton issued Executive Order 13154 on May 3, 2000, establishing the Kosovo Campaign Medal. The Campaign Medal will be awarded to Members of the Armed Forces for service in Kosovo or its contiguous waters or airspace **after** March 24, 1999, and **before** a terminal date yet to be set by the Secretary of Defense. The Secretaries of each of the military departments will decide who is eligible to receive the medal.

Recipients of a campaign medal are eligible for veterans' preference if they served for at least 24 months and were released from active duty under honorable conditions. Reservists are eligible if they were released under honorable conditions for the full period for which ordered or called to active duty. Veterans with compensable, service-connected disabilities, or those who were discharged or released from active duty are exempt from the minimum service requirement for:

- i a disability incurred or aggravated in line of duty, or
- i for hardship or other reasons under 10 U.S.C. 1171 or 1173.

Please note that the Executive order specifies that "any such member may be awarded the Kosovo Campaign Medal in lieu of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM), or the Armed Forces Service Medal, but no person may be awarded more than one of these three medals by reason of service in Kosovo..." The Department of the Army informed OPM that the Campaign Medal was awarded *instead* of an AFEM, and that no AFEM will be awarded for Kosovo.

Employees who wish to claim veterans' preference or to claim service credit based on their service in this campaign should submit the appropriate documentation showing the award of the campaign medal to Carol J. Mehallick, Office of Human Resources, Benefits Office, Mail Stop 15-1.



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WHAT KIND OF RIGHTS?

Weingarten rights are mandated by law and came to be through an actual case decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1975. In that case, management had suspected an employee, named Weingarten, of theft and called the employee in to ask questions. The employee insisted on having a union representative present to help her respond to the questions. The manager refused to allow such assistance. When the employee refused to answer the questions without a representative present, the company fired the employee.

An unfair labor practice complaint was filed and eventually was heard by the Supreme Court. In the decision, the Court determined that if the meeting included both management and a bargaining unit employee, was investigative in nature, and the unit member feared discipline as a result of the discussion, upon request, Ms. Weingarten was entitled to union representation at the meeting. Agencies are required to post annual notices of these rights. The following "Annual Notice of Right to Request Union Representation" satisfies this requirement.

ANNUAL NOTICE OF RIGHT TO REQUEST UNION REPRESENTATION (WEINGARTEN RIGHTS)

The Civil Service Reform Act gives employees in units represented by an exclusive labor organization the right to request union representation at an examination by a representative of the agency in connection with an investigation if the employee believes the examination may result in disciplinary action.

Section 7114(a) of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA) states that:

- (2) An exclusive representative of an appropriate unit in an agency shall be given the opportunity to be represented at
 - (B) any examination of an employee in the unit by a representative of the agency in connection with an investigation if
 - (i) the employee reasonably believes that the examination may result in disciplinary action against the employee; and
 - (ii) the employee requests representation.

Section 7114(a)(3) of the CSRA requires that employees receive annual notice of the rights set forth above. If you have any questions relative to this notice, please contact Lori O. Pietravoia, Personnel Management Specialist, at extension 3-2506.

NASA EMPLOYMENT WEB SITES

NASA JOBS

NASA has an employment opportunities Web site that employees and the general public can visit to find just about everything you would want to know about employment with NASA. For example, all of NASA's Civil Service vacancies are listed on this site. Information on the Astronaut Program, Student Programs, and other opportunities with the Agency is also provided. The Web page address is:

<http://www.nasajobs.nasa.gov/>.

The Web page itself is divided into five sections: (1) about NASA, (2) Working for NASA, (3) NASA Jobs, (4) Benefits, and (5) How to Apply for Jobs with NASA. You can also reach this Web site through the OHR Web page

<http://www.lerc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/>,

Take some time to visit and bookmark this excellent informative site. We hope you find the employment opportunities business card (mailed separately) helpful.

SMART

(Staffer, Manager, and Recruiter Tools)

The SMART site is only available to the NASA Centers. This site provides a wealth of information that is of interest to personnel specialists, managers, and recruiters involved in the NASA hiring process. The SMART site can be found at:

<http://hro.jsc.nasa.gov/smart/>.

This site can also be accessed via the OHR Web page.

Within-Grade Increases

A within-grade increase (previously termed "step increase") is an increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his/her position to the next higher step of that grade. In order to receive a within-grade increase, the employee's performance must be at an acceptable level of competence. To be determined at an acceptable level of competence, the employee's most recent performance rating of record must be at least passing or fully successful. The employee must also have completed the required waiting period for advancement to the next higher step of the grade of his/her position. If the employee is performing at an acceptable level of competence, nothing is required by the supervisor and the employee will automatically receive his/her within-grade increase. However, if a determination has been made by the supervisor that the employee's performance is NOT at an acceptable level of competence, the supervisor must immediately contact the personnel management specialist who services his/her organization for assistance in following the regulatory requirements for withholding the within-grade increase.

Is Your Family Protected? NEBA and FEGLI Life Insurance

What is NEBA? NEBA is the NASA Employees Benefit Association, established in 1952, for the sole purpose of providing low-cost life insurance protection to NASA employees.

What is FEGLI? Federal Employee Government Life Insurance was initiated 2 years after NEBA, also to make available low-cost life insurance to Federal (including NASA) employees.

What is the difference? Basically, both programs offer group term life insurance for all age groups and their dependents. NEBA is a much better value for employees through age 55, while FEGLI assumes that role from 55 on. For example, FEGLI charges \$.155 per thousand dollars of coverage at any age. NEBA charges only \$.03 per thousand under 35, \$.04 35-39, still only \$.09 per thousand 45-49. FEGLI, however, doubles the amount of life insurance for the under 35 group, decreasing by 10 percent each year until 45. NEBA counters by offering coverage essentially double your salary with a maximum of \$100,000, while FEGLI, except for the feature just noted, only provides coverage on its basic plan up to \$2,000 more than one's salary. NEBA, as a result of low claims experience the past 2 years has given its members refunds in 1998 and 1999.

"Double Coverage": Many NASA employees hold both NEBA and FEGLI. But if you want to join FEGLI (without a physical), you must wait for a "once-in-awhile" Open Season, as occurred in 1999. You can join NEBA anytime, however, you must complete a brief health questionnaire first. There is always NEBA Open Season.

Review your Coverage: Many careful insurance shoppers select NEBA as their insurer during their younger years, and stay with NEBA through the growth of their families and into their mid-fifties. Many will stay with NEBA thereafter as well. Others will look to FEGLI at that point as insurance costs become more favorable (55 and up), and because if they retain FEGLI for at least 5 consecutive years prior to retirement you may keep 25 percent of your final coverage forever at no cost after 65.

Optional Insurance: Both plans also offer spouse and children's coverage as well as optional life coverage for the primary insured. NEBA's coverage of children under age 19 is free (you may convert to permanent \$25,000 coverage with no physical at that age). NEBA also offers an outstanding travel-accident package up to \$100,000 at very low cost. And although you cannot take NEBA basic life insurance with you when you leave the Agency, you do have a conversion privilege for an individual policy. NEBA optional coverage stays with you after you leave NASA until age 70.

New NEBA Features (Effective October 1999): NEBA's Board of Directors meets every year to rigorously review the plan with its underwriter. In addition to the approved refund, the Board also increased coverage in many of the optional areas at no additional cost. Maximum coverage will increase from \$150,000 to \$250,000, while all those with \$75,000, \$100,000, and \$125,000 will have their coverage increased by \$25,000 at no additional cost. Those at the previous maximum of \$150,000 will go to \$200,000 at no change in premium. The increases in coverage will be "guaranteed issue" which means that every member in these categories will receive the increase in coverage without further evidence of insurability. Those holding lesser optional amounts will benefit by a reduction in premium.

NEBA Chapter Offices at Each Center: Your NEBA chapter officers urge you to review your insurance needs on a periodic basis and to contact them at your individual Center at any time to offer you assistance on insurance protection. You may also contact the NEBA Web site at: <http://neba.nasa.gov/>.

We hope that you find this information beneficial and that you consider the NEBA plan, a good investment in your life insurance needs.



Take Another Glance Office of Human Resources Web Pages

If you haven't noticed, the following sites have moved to:

LLF

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/LLF>

Medical

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/Medical>

Fitness

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/Fitness>

Partnership

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/Partnership>

FEB

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/FEB>

EAP

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/EAP>

Telecommuting

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/TC>

ASK TRAINING

Q. What are training records and what kind of information can be added to an employee's training record?

A. The following official definition of a training record is taken from ISO procedure LeR-P3.3.1:

"A permanent record maintained by the Organization Development and Training Office (OD&TO), which documents an employee's training history including general training such as a single course, academic instruction, or conference." It may also include on-the-job training. "Although it includes documentation of training that leads to qualification, it does not include documentation of the qualification." It specifically excludes training not sponsored by NASA through funding or duty time.

To qualify as a training instance, the training must be a minimum of 1 hour in length during on-duty hours with or without associated cost. If the training takes place on off-duty hours, there must be a cost associated with the instance.

Q. I took a college course on my own time and at my own expense. Can I have the course completion added to my training record?

A. No. Based on the official definition, this course does not qualify as an official training record entry. The system is only used to capture officially sanctioned training.

Q. I was previously an employee of another NASA Center. Can I have my training information from that Center added to my training record?

A. No. We currently add only GRC supported training and are not allowed to add that information because of database restrictions. However, the Agency is rolling out a new database system, which centrally collects training history for all NASA employees no matter which Center you work at. With this new system, if you complete training at another Center, they will add it and as you move from one Center to another, your training record will go with you.

Q. How can I get a copy of my training record?

A. All NASA civil service employees have access to their records and all supervisors have access to their employees' records through the Human Resources Information System (HRIS). If you don't have a user-id, please go to the OHR Web page at <http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/hris.htm> to obtain information. Our office is also available to provide you a copy of your training record if you do not have access to HRIS but we request that you retrieve it from HRIS when at all possible.

Q. HRIS does not show all of the training that I completed. How do I update it?

A. If this was an off-site course, did you return your course or conference evaluation? This is the only indicator to the OD&TO that you have completed a course. If you did not return it, your record will not be updated. If you have returned the evaluation and it has not shown up on your record, you need to fill out a Training Record Update form (LeR-F3.3.1-0480-004(W)(b) which is available in Livelink at:

<http://livelink.lerc.nasa.gov/livelink/livelink?func=login&objId=382515&objAction=browsebmsfoldernologin&sort=documentnumber> and attach any documentation you have that supports your completion of the training.

Send your questions to "Ask Training," at M.S. 15-4.

IS YOUR WORKSTATION FIT FOR YOU?

Call on NASA Glenn's Ergonomic Assessment Team to find out! An ergonomics specialist from the safety and medical team can assess and make recommendations for a more healthy/ergonomic (fit for you) workstation. Studies show that simple adjustments to the workstation can assure high productivity and avoidance of illness and injury (i.e., carpal tunnel syndrome, low back pain). Call one of the on-site team members below if interested.

Renee Rothgery 3-6313

John Brinkman 3-3028

Angela Windau 3-3043

Deborah Ripley 3-2361

Voluntary Contributions Under the Civil Service Retirement System

Eligibility

If you are an employee covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the CSRS Offset provisions and you want to receive a larger annuity than would be payable based on your service and "high-3," you may establish a voluntary contribution account to purchase additional annuity. However, if you owe a deposit or redeposit for civilian service that wasn't covered by retirement or for which you received a refund, you will be eligible to make voluntary contributions only after the deposit or redeposit is paid. Also, if you previously made voluntary contributions and received a refund of those contributions, you may not make voluntary contributions again, unless you had a break in service after receiving the refund.

If you are covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), you are not eligible to make voluntary contributions. You may, however, retain funds on account that you deposited while subject to the CSRS.

Amount of Additional Annuity

At retirement, each \$100 in your voluntary contributions account (including interest earned) will provide an additional annuity of \$7 a year, plus 20 cents for each full year you are over age 55 at the time you retire. You may also choose to share the additional annuity by electing to provide a survivor annuity. However, your additional annuity would then be reduced by 10 to 40 percent depending on the difference between your age and the age of the person designated to receive the survivor annuity. Any person, related or unrelated to you, may be designated, and need not be the same person for whom regular survivor annuity benefits were elected.

Note: Voluntary contributions annuities are not increased by cost of living increases.

Interest

Voluntary contributions earn a variable interest rate determined by the Treasury Department each calendar year, based on the average yield of new investments purchased by the Retirement Fund during the previous FY. The interest credited to each voluntary contributions account is compounded annually on December 31.

Interest accrues to the date of the refund calculation, separation (including retirement) or transfer to a position not subject to CSRS or FERS whichever is earliest. If you expect to be leaving Federal service, you can avoid having

NOTE TO SUPERVISORS

You will no longer be notified of an employee's Within-Grade due date when the employee is being promoted, since you now have access to the Human Resources Information System (HRIS) which contains this information in addition to other pertinent information for your employees.

a period of time during which your funds are not earning interest by planning ahead. Use the expedited procedure described later in this article.

If you separate from Federal service with entitlement to a deferred annuity at age 62, interest continues to accrue to the beginning date of your annuity or death, whichever is earlier. However, if you separate from Federal service with entitlement to a deferred annuity at age 62 and request a refund of your voluntary contribution account, interest will only be paid to the date of your separation regardless of whether you receive a deferred annuity.

Limitations on Voluntary Contributions

Voluntary contributions may be made only in amounts of \$25 or in multiples of \$25 (i.e., \$50, \$75, etc.). Total contributions may not exceed 10 percent of the total basic pay you received during all of your Federal service. The 10 percent limit test applies at each point of time that a deposit is made and is not based upon a projection of life-time earnings.

Refund of Voluntary Contributions

You may withdraw all voluntary contributions with interest at any time before receiving an annuity based on those contributions. If you die while still in Federal service (or after leaving but before you begin to receive annuity benefits), the voluntary contributions account, plus interest, will be paid to your survivors as a lump-sum payment. Please see the information on expediting refunds of voluntary contributions below.

If you die after retirement, but before having received additional annuity payments equal to your voluntary contributions plus interest, the difference will be paid either as a lump sum or in additional survivor annuity payments, depending upon your election at retirement.

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Federal Taxation of Voluntary Contributions

If you take a refund of voluntary contributions, any accrued interest is taxable in the tax year in which you receive it. In addition, if you receive the refund before you reach age 59 and 1/2, the interest portion of the refund is subject to an additional 10 percent early distribution tax.

Payments to survivors are not subject to the 10 percent tax. To determine whether the 10 percent tax applies, you should get the Internal Revenue Service Form 5329 (and instructions) from your local Internal Revenue Service Office. The interest portion of the refund is eligible for rollover treatment.

If you will receive an additional annuity as a result of your voluntary contributions, it will be taxed under the "General Rule." Please refer to IRS Publication 721 "Comprehensive Tax Guide to U.S. Civil Service Benefits" for further information or call IRS at 800-829-3676.

Expediting Refunds of Voluntary Contributions

You can elect to roll over the interest to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), or other qualified retirement plan, to defer income tax. To expedite payment, you may submit your rollover election with your refund request. Complete a Voluntary Contributions Election form, RI 38-124 and send it directly to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to the address given on the form. Contact your agency personnel office to obtain this form, and the explanation form RI 38-125, Voluntary Contributions Notice. Since interest accrual generally stops at separation, if you are retiring you should submit your refund request to OPM at least 60 days before retirement.

Application Form and Payments

If you want to make voluntary contributions, you must file a Standard Form 2804 (Application to Make Voluntary Contributions) with the Office of Human Resources (OHR) your agency personnel office. After the application is

forwarded to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) by OHR and approved, OPM will assign you an account number, and send instructions for making contributions.

Do not send money with your application. Contributions will not be accepted until the application is approved. OPM will not approve an application from you if (1) you have not deposited amounts covering all civilian service, or (2) you have previously received a refund of voluntary contributions, unless you were separated for more than 3 calendar days, and were again employed under the Civil Service Retirement System after the refund was paid.

Additional Information

You may obtain copies of the pamphlets listed below from your personnel office or from OPM's Web site <http://www.opm.gov/asd>.

The pamphlets in the Retirement Facts Series, which provide more detailed information about the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), are:

- Retirement Facts #1 -- The Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-1)
- Retirement Facts #2 -- Military Service Credit Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-2)
- Retirement Facts #3 -- Deposits and Redeposit Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-3)
- Retirement Facts #4 -- Disability Retirement Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-4)
- Retirement Facts #5 -- Survivor Benefits Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-5)
- Retirement Facts #6 -- Early Retirement Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-6)
- Retirement Facts #7 -- Computing Retirement Benefits Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-7)
- Retirement Facts #8 -- Credit for Unused Sick Leave Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-8)
- Retirement Facts #9 -- Refunds Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-9)
- Retirement Facts #10 -- Voluntary Contributions Under the Civil Service Retirement System (RI 83-10)
- Retirement Facts #11 -- Information for Separating Civil Service Retirement System Employees Who Are Not Eligible for an Immediate Annuity (RI 83-13)
- Retirement Facts #12 -- Information About Reemployment for Civil Service Retirement System Annuitants (RI 83-18)
- Retirement Facts #13 -- CSRS Offset Retirement (RI 83-19)
- Retirement Facts #14 -- Law Enforcement and Firefighter Civil Service Retirement System Retirement (RI 83-20)

April 19, 2000, OHR FORUM QUESTION:

What's the phone number and Web site address for Employee Express?

Employee Express Web site:

www.employeeexpress.gov

Employee Express Personal Identification Number (PIN)

If you have lost your PIN or have questions concerning your PIN, contact the Employee Express Help Desk at 912-757-3030.

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Pamphlets applicable to employees in both the Civil Service Retirement System and Federal Employees Retirement System are:

- Court-Ordered Benefits for Former Spouses (RI 84-1)
- Work-Related Injuries and Fatalities -- What You and Your Family Need to Know About Your Benefits (RI 84-2)
- Life Events and Your Retirement and Insurance Benefits (For Employees) (RI 84-3)
- Thinking About Retirement? (RI 83-11)



Publications for employees who are under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) are:

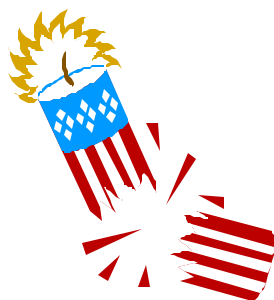
- FERS Brochure (An Overview of Your Benefits) (RI 90-1)
- FERS Facts #1 -- Information for Separating FERS Employees Who Are Not Eligible for an Immediate Annuity (RI 90-11)
- FERS Facts #2 -- Information About Reemployment for FERS Annuitants (RI 90-18)

For employees who are eligible to transfer to the FERS:

- FERS Transfer Handbook (A Guide to Making Your Decision) (RI 90-3)

Pamphlets on the Federal Employees Health and Life Insurance Programs are:

- Federal Employees Health Benefits Guide (RI 70-1)
- Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (RI 79-27)
- Federal Employees Group Life Booklet (RI 76-21)



GIVE BLOOD, SAVE A LIFE

Did you know that NASA Glenn blood donors have donated 872 productive pints of blood to the American Red Cross between July 1999 and June 2000. When you consider that each pint of blood collected is broken down into at least 3 components, the result is that **2616** lives have been saved!

On an average 2-day drive at NASA Glenn, 155 productive pints of blood are donated. Let's shoot for 200 productive pints at the next Bloodmobile, August 16-17, 2000. There will be a raffle each day where six donors will be eligible to win a "neat little treat!" You can only give blood every 56 days.

NASA External Awards

Every quarter, the Center receives requests for nominations for a wide variety of non-NASA awards. A call letter with nomination criteria summaries is sent to the directorate offices for distribution. Please call the Awards Office at extension 3-2848 for specific information.

The following is a list of non-NASA external awards solicitations due this quarter, July to September 2000.

AMERICAN ASTRONAUTICAL SOCIETY AWARDS

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF AERONAUTICS AND ASTRONAUTICS

BLACK ENGINEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

ELDER STATESMAN OF AVIATION AWARD

ERNEST ORLANDO LAWRENCE AWARD

EXECUTIVE EXCELLENCE AWARD

GEICO PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

HEROISM AWARD

LEMELSON-MIT PRIZE

MENTOR AWARDS

NATIONAL SPACE TROPHY

PRESIDENT'S QUALITY AWARD PROGRAM

ROWLETT INFORMATION SYSTEMS SECURITY (INFOSEC) AWARDS

WOMEN IN AEROSPACE (WIA) AWARDS

WRIGHT BROTHERS MEMORIAL TROPHY